Exile and Coin

By Jonathan Olvera

It was another salty afternoon, and our character, a young man, escaped from captivity aboard a ship to begin a journey to claim personal and national independence. The world shaped by monarchy, shifting empires, and spiritual colonization. His struggle becomes a blueprint for a new society, one forced through exile, labor, and faith. The sacrifice of cattle for food. The spilling of blood. And the death of cattle. And the coin that was to be traded to represent the new interest in America. And to place this young man in a pre-industrial world. Monarchy is ruled with absolute power, and spiritual movements reshape entire civilizations.

A young man breaks free from maritime captivity, filled by burning desire for autonomy, not only as an individual but on behalf of the emerging nation. He journeys across the land submitting to royal authority in order to study its inner workings and has pleasant conversations with other people who are also in the settlement. Serving under a complex market, he finds himself trading jewels and negotiating improvised systems of taxation. Learning to survive and resist within the confines of imperial order, his defiance is eventually met with exile to the desert.

In this harsh new environment, the exile must rebuild, laying stones, foraging structures, and forming new valleys under certain sand. Jonathan doesn't abandon his ideals. Instead, he crafts rudimentary tools and devices to collect signatures and create consensus, founding a currency of loyalty and belief among the people.

In a time before the Great War, the story unfolds alongside the expansion of the Mormon temple in early America and the rise of Chinese influence and the hybridization of English, Roman, French, and Native traditions. High between ancient Aztec memory, Catholic dominion, and Mormon theocracy, this tale explores how spiritual, political, and cultural forces blend to create new societal norms and how people find freedom, meaning, and survival under the shadow of an empire involving slavery.

Jonathan, also known as Oliver, in whispered desert tongues, is a child of three empires, born under the shadow of English order, shaped by Roman discipline, and stirred by the mystic fervor of Spanish-Nazarene devotion. He is a man of labor rebellion. He begins his life in chains, held in the underbelly of a ship. Not as a criminal, but as an idea too dangerous to be free. His heart yearns for something larger than survival.

From the very beginning, he seeks not only to liberate himself, but to write into earth a new name for the people, a nation without masters, not only by justice and sacred duty. Training in the custom of kings and courts, he bows when necessary and trades like a man. Twice his age, offering jewels for peace, fairness, favor, yet in his mind remains encaged.

When exiled to a desert for daring to suggest equality, he does not perish; he builds. Among stone, heat, and silence, Jonathan finds voice. He collects the wills of the people, signatures not for petitions but for prophecy. His following grows not from war cries but from the quiet dignity of those who labor with hope. He is a mirror of ancient prophets and modern founders, a mandatory between all world dominion and the future's freedom.

Jonathan says to himself, *I did not come here to be another servant of the crown. I bowed once to understand its weight. Now I write and spare my own. Will not trade stones for survival forever. We will build a law that does not bleed the poor. We will sign not in the blood. Relief.* One aim after another until this desert remembers. *We were here. We were free.*

Another day on the salt platforms. Wooden floors in the Southwest Territory. Jonathan starts his day in a conversation with another person in the settlement. They were debating about sacrifice and livestock and the new crowds in the Southwest Territory. He was talking with another man from Great Britain.

Jonathan was saying, *“You eat meat.”*

The man answered, *“Yes, as a source of protein.”*

Jonathan said, in his political debates, *“Could it be a problem for us?”*

The other man answered, *“I don't see what could be the problem if it is what has to be done today.”*

Jonathan replied, *“Oh goodness, just another day in this sacrifice. What other blessings might be upon me?”*

The man replied, *“I guess I can see what you are saying, old man.”*

Jonathan responded cleverly, *“I am thankful for that.”*

Again he said, *“Well, it looks like there might be a new flow of people that might come into the territory and it might not be too bad if everything goes well and there's not too many riots or disagreements.”*

As the day progressed, the Jewish men from lands far away came in with gold and jewels and discussed their new politics. The crowd commented, *“I'm disgusted with the whole assembly.”* Others pitched in the idea to gather.

Jonathan said, *“I can tell you, I pray every day.”* He also mentioned, *“I make every effort to avoid mischief. Although it is a battle.”*

Another man was a peacemaker for an island settlement afar. He asked, *“Is anybody offended by my comments?”*

Jonathan responded, *“I am just surprised at the progress at the location. It is very quick.”*

And so, the day quickly ended and the sun was covered with a dark cover of night.

At night, Jonathan went back to his cabin where he was quartered and given a special provision of wage to locate into the settlement. He looked around and he saw a group of people that he was familiar with from the shipyard and the work of it and other travelers.

He asked, *“Person, give me a cigarette if you don't mind, to assist me?”*

The other man said, *“I need a bottle of liquor.”*

His partner said, *“I drink the liquid.”*

Jonathan responded, *“I drink wine as well.”*

They responded, *“What is there to do today? Then we'll have a bottle of liquor.”*

Jonathan replied, *“If it's not too much of a worry to men dressed in green.”*

A third man, British from Great Britain, was there to work. He was feeling now more comfortable with the idea.

One of them said, *“I can't see myself doing anything like that.”*

Another said, *“That's right.”*

A woman, looking into the quarters where Aloe Vera or Jonathan was quartering, said, *“God bless.”*

The sheriff, who was just passing by, said, *“All the mischief and our visible efforts to continue.”*

Jonathan was very excited, almost something to say all the time. And he said, *“Be patient.”*

Another neighbor on another platform said, *“Do you know that person?”*

He replied, *“Well, it is what I owe to be honored, honorable, to be civil.”*

The moon hung high in the sky, round and white.

“Hey, y'all. Decided to head inside. And to come out early. And to look for work.”

When the morning came and the sun broke the darkness, he said, *“Good morning.”*

John said, *“Good day to you. How are all of you?”*

Another man said, *“I have a terrible headache. And it's awful.”*

Jonathan commented, *“Thing is now I have to travel to view from the elevation changes. I have a job to do here with an explorer who is coming from a land far away. Does anybody know where the man from the cabin is this location?”*

They responded, *“Who?”*

He said, *“The new explorer. I was told everybody would know who he was.”*

A man insisted, *“Oh yes, he went to China.”*

Jonathan asked, *“Would he be long?”*

The town replied, *“I can forget, but I'll keep in mind that you're looking for the man and I'll call you when I see.”*

Jonathan thought there might be work that was cancelled for the day and he might have to head into another cabin because the town was being established.

There was a line of cabins going 12 buildings on one side and 12 across the road into a local game room.

Johnson said, *“I don't play cards too much.”*

He walked inside and created a town full of men. Another man in the background said, *“Would you like to hear a story? I have a couple jokes. Do you like men or do you like boys?”*

Jonathan, in his politics, replied, *“I... I like sacrifices.”*

The man replied, pointing out the appointments, the prudence of the young man.

He said, *“That is good because we have a king...”*

John replied, *“Repent ye, repent ye, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

He went to the table, spared a dime and a fair nickel to entreat himself to a nice drink of alcohol.

He asked the bartender, *“What else is there to do?”*

The man replied, *“The church is for children, the temple is for men.”*

A woman in a red dress and also a game attendant at the bar said out loud, *“Oh, I tried.”*

Another woman coming from the bathroom to accompany her said, *“It stinks.”*

The Pharisees from Jerusalem, Israel, were there on political business on the acquisition of the estate and the actual log cabins with the foundations of the settlement. They walked in bearing their sacred items.

Jonathan exclaimed, *“Oh my Jerusalem, I've been saved by an angel this company!”*

Meanwhile, another man, close by in a green and striped suit, an attendant of the establishment, was talking using a device and microphone. He said, *“I am listening. It is exhausting. I have a pounding headache going through the entire location and cataloging everything making every detail perfect.”*

He mentioned to the microphone, *“Sometimes it's hard to tell what to do, to differentiate, when the question is, is that a dead girl or is that a goat going through the cattle and the cows and the pigs? Oh my, that smells terrible.”*

She was looking at his index inventory and paperwork involving slavery.

Jonathan, while in the game room and having a time in the new settlement—which consisted of rows of wedding cabins, 12 across one street and 12 across the other—witnessed the town making a proclamation. There were cowboys and merchants, doctors, shaman workers or politicians, and many colors of clothing: red, blue. Drinks were served, games were being played.

One of them exclaimed, *“We have a king!”*

A preacher in the game room, having a good time, said to all, *“Repent ye. Repent ye. The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

A person by the bar, having drinks, asked, *“What else is there to do?”*

A man mentioned churches for children. Another man, observing politics, said, *“Temple is for men.”* A very devout Christian man tried in the background to influence another belief.

Another man at the bar, serving drinks, commented, *“My Jerusalem,”* as a Pharisee promoting new religion in the area came, followed by a man with a pale complexion. The crowd murmured, *“Could they be coming in from another place?”* Others said they might be short losers at the local sports centers.

Jonathan cried out, *“Let me be your leader.”*

The others exclaimed, *“Oh, that looks nice.”*

The temple politicians came from across the way. They were questioned, asked questions, and made comments like, *“Is that a new order?”* Others wondered, exclaimed, *“Is that sanitation?”*

The merchant at the location made a post to create a stall to lobby his own cause. He said, *“I am listening.”*

A nearby man said, *“Oh, I surrender my will to the guardian angels.”*

Jonathan replied, *“That's getting away with it.”*

The manager of the bar came into the place and reported, *“He needed to consult the sheriff. What's going on here? Is that prostitution?”*

The leader of the group asked the manager, *“Did I give you money?”*

It became an argument. The leader asked, *“Do you need more money?”* And they joked, *“Show me justice.”*

The man leading the group of women said, *“It is a service.”*

The manager replied, *“I've had a good one.”*

Jonathan mentioned to the crowd of good-looking women, *“I've made my money pending at this location. I don't sell everyone.”*

The man replied, *“Is that really important?”*

Jonathan said, *“It's what I am doing right now.”*

The man leading the group said, *“Bless you. What is the common order in this place?”*

Jonathan replied, *“It is a service to the groups in the area that are to the cabins. They are serviced separately.”*

The man asked, *“Do they recognize the steel import?”*

Jonathan replied, *“Well, what a sight. Almost saying, of course.”*

He asked, *“Who takes a look around here?”*

Jonathan said, *“Almost everybody does their share of work in the steel import. It's very important so that we use lumber.”*

Jonathan said, *“Some work is better than none. I see potential in this place; there may be lots of steel that I may acquire here to build a solid foundation for large construction.”*

Isaiah and Jonathan replied, *“We have heard of you. This is the desolation where the sun does shine so bright that it is properly assessed as destitution.”*

The man replied, *“That's a long story.”*

He sat down at the bar and prepared to take a drink from the attendant with nickels, dimes, and quarters of note, avoiding large notes without making a good conversation.

“Why, that's a big bag of politics you carry around with you,” said Jonathan.

He replied, *“Well, that's what I plan to do. I plan to do politics here, and I plan to leave my man here with women. They're going to be called the Nephites, and I wish that they'd be elected and recognized.”*

Jonathan said, *“That's fine. That's a fine idea. It might take some work for the people to become accepted. People are very wary of what they trust and how they breathe.”*

The man replied, *“Well, me and my woman, we have some plates, and we have ideas for this place about how to make it work. Everyone, I'll take my own share.”*

Jonathan replied, *“This is commonplace.”*

Jonathan asked him, *“Are you a fair man?”*

He replied, *“I am not corrupt.”*

Jonathan asked again, *“Does your system function? I was working on something similar. Whose idea was that?”*

Jonathan said, *“It was my own.”*

The other man said jokingly, *“Don't worry, that's gonna end.”*

Jonathan said, *“That's terrible. What could these dogs, these hungry dogs, be looking for?”*

The man waved him off. Jonathan went to speak. Another man nearby heard the loud conversation and said, *“I heard that Nephi is the same as the dog.”*

Jonathan said, *“They must be hungry. What do you think they really want?”*

The man answered, *“My guess is acknowledgment.”*

Jonathan replied, *“It's a new idea to use the language and work to put together a trade dollar. What do you think if I follow the same? With my name on it and all my effort?”*

The man said jokingly, *“I don't even know you.”*

Jonathan said, *“I said, it's Pope.”*

He replied, *“Whatever it is, I can't wait for you to get to it.”*

Jonathan replied, *“Tempt me. I'll give you a nickel and a dime and a couple of spare coins to give you.”*

He reached into his pocket and pulled out coins to buy a drink for the man. He moved around the room, making conversation with people politely but kind of loud since it was an alcohol-fueled environment.

Jonathan said to himself, *“The import-export, oh, so cruel. Everything sells at an auction.”*

A man pointed at him: *“Look over there. It's Nephi, the visitor. He's just like you.”*

Jonathan asked, *“Is that sure? Where I came from, we weren't allowed to move too much or do anything suspicious. They were caught trying to make a religion. They came here. Now they're allowed to. And what offense would this be?”*

He answered jokingly, *“The creation of a false prophet. Fake Pharisee.”*

Jonathan replied jokingly, *“How is that supposed to bless my food?”*

The man answered, *“If I was caught being a fake Pharisee, I want to kill myself.”*

Jonathan said, *“I don't know much about all that, but I've been successful here myself. What is with this whole crowd here? Is it political?”*

The man said, *“There ain't much honey and there ain't much garlic here. I like their money though. I like it going to the bank.”*

Jonathan told him, *“That sounds like a good arrangement. Either they keep their word, there's plenty of grubs and plenty of worms. When the sun comes up and the darkness does cover the blazing sun, what will the moon bring to the table? It could include a couple of fraudsters.”*

A woman came up behind them in the trash and exclaimed, *“I'm excited.”*

Jonathan agreed, *“I'm very excited.”*

The next day, Jonathan said, *“Hot, hot, hot, my head is hot.”* He had a drink and left the game room, which was adjacent to a saloon, a post office, and local banks for lumber and grain. He was fetching water from a faucet as he was drinking.

He said to himself, *“All this water is making me heavy.”*

As a woman woke up, he said, *“I put a wet towel on my head and I need medication.”*

In the distance, there was a loud noise of presses—mechanical presses, cyanide, acid, and the banging of hammers. The attendant who had spent the night with them asked, *“What is that noise?”*

Jonathan said, *“I don't like to swear, and I'm not going to be too specific, but it's hard work.”*

In the background, the woman said, *“It is a sacrifice. Have you seen it done before?”*

Jonathan said, *“No. Not really.”*

He left. Jonathan replied to the woman, *“I like the smell.”*

She said, *“I like cigarettes.”*

Jonathan said, *“It would make me feel better if you were a little more interested in that cloud in the distance and when it's time to get to work.”*

She said, *“Why would I tell you about work?”*

He said, *“Be polite.”*

She said, *“I'm not sure exactly what you're talking about.”*

Jonathan said, *“As a last wish.”*

She asked, *“How does it look, this order in this play?”*

She said, *“There's very much to do. There is theater to be done. There is sacrifice. There is the responsibility of teaching children.”*

Jonathan said, *“That's what I like to do.”*

She said, *“Oh, really?”*

He said, *“Excuse me again. I've got to go check the train and see if there's any work to do. See if there are any big orders.”*

He said, *“Might get caught up in too much work. Might come across a slave, a monkey, a gorilla, a gorilla slave, or a slave monkey.”*

He said, *“I'm joking.”*

She said, *“I don't like to think about that.”*

Jonathan said, *“Well, this is exile.”*

She said, *“I'm gonna sit right here and wait for you to get back.”*

He said, *“Very nice. That's very nice.”*

And he went off to look for work.

The woman was back at the quarters and she was thinking, *“Why should I be responsible? Somebody help me. Oh my goodness. The weather is very hot.”*

The woman knew the vocabulary and repeated to herself, *“Ill repute, not that resourceful, lucky.”*

She asked aloud, *“Is there something bothering you?”*

She said, *“I prefer to use yourself.”*

So it's a very familiar story in the Southwest. The use of cyanide and acid made exposure to the chemicals, and people acted very funny.

“You've got mail. I do become excited easily,” she said to herself. *“It was very hot.”*

Jonathan had just arrived at the job location. He was having a conversation with the man at the labor booth and continued, *“Observing my resource mechanically, I would make myself available to work here today.”*

He said, *“That's very nice. Good day to you.”*

After the conversation, he told the man, *“My friend, I am as simple as the man. That's next. I didn't mean to bother you.”*

Before he remembered to dismiss him, he told, *“I have a list of chores in the quarry for you to do.”*

He said, *“It's not convenient to call this an occupation.”*

Jonathan said, *“I'm only a human. I'm not a machine or a robot. I'll be willing to do them.”*

The man continued, *“The important location is working on science.”*

Jonathan said, *“That sounds very interesting. To work here in the new design, I'm very excited to tell you we'll have time to discuss our science and our method. Things aren't always visible or obvious. No one likes to lose, and no one looks like a fool.”*

The work involves medicine and practice. *“I'm very glad that you take the time to pay attention because it's going to be important later on. In this line of work, you will come across the use of obscenities and profanities. You will have to work alongside riots and corruptions. Be foolish to get lost in other activities that can erase your time and resources,”* Jonathan said.

He added jokingly, *“Say, have I explained enough for you? Because I could do it again.”*

The man said, *“No sir, at all. I really understand. It's work. I'll be here for you.”*

Jonathan said, *“I would love to come and continue this conversation if that's what you'd like me to do.”*

He said jokingly, *“The shortcomings of humanity, the hunger and pain.”*

The man finished, *“The nature of being a dog. Let every day be the same.”*

Jonathan told the man, *“If I'm not here, I'll be out gathering stones along the roads of the Roman Empire.”*

The man asked, *“Is that all you do?”*

Jonathan said, *“I'm good at gathering stones for whatever is necessary. It's a long walk from the cobblestone path.”*

The man finished, *“It's necessary to get a day's work.”*

They parted ways and then came across another man who said, *“Young man, how are you?”*

Jonathan replied, *“I'm doing okay, I'm doing good.”*

He asked, *“Did you just come from that booth over there?”*

Jonathan replied, *“It's a long story.”*

The man asked, *“Are you familiar with the rules of the coin? Would you like to work around here?”*

Jonathan replied, *“I will work with you. If you don't mind, I will need to instruct you and give directives on the work site. Although I've heard you talk before, it's not your first day. I need you to go fetch water, that way you can find water and bring it to me.”*

Jonathan said, *“It's getting dark. Would you mind if I came by and worked again with you tomorrow?”*

The man said, *“You might be right. I can go talk to the man from the quarry or the man from the post. It's a long way back out to the street.”*

Jonathan replied, *“Even if it will be my first day, I can become familiar with your quarry. I'll make sure to make some coffee in the morning.”*

Jonathan said, *“It's an excellent choice to make a company.”*

The man said, *“We'll be quick. This will be the most satisfying for me.”*

Jonathan said, *“Coffee in the morning is how I'll wake up, and I'll keep some in the bag.”*

“Yes, sir, that's what I do,” he said.

The next morning, Jonathan rose early. He brewed the coffee he promised, the aroma filling the cabin quarters. He carried the steaming cup outside, where the sun was already casting long, gold shadows across the desert platform.

He said aloud, *“Good morning, world. Let’s see what work awaits today.”*

A man from the settlement, carrying tools for the quarry, nodded. *“Morning, Jonathan. You ready for another day in the sun?”*

Jonathan replied, *“As ready as the stones themselves.”*

The man laughed and said, *“That's the spirit. We’ve got a lot to do. The new buildings aren’t going to erect themselves.”*

Jonathan walked toward the quarry, water bucket in hand. He noted the arrangement of cabins—twelve across each side of the street. He muttered, *“Order in the chaos. Twelve by twelve, just like life.”*

A woman appeared from one of the cabins, wiping her brow. *“Jonathan! Are you heading to the quarry already?”*

He nodded. *“Yes. Coffee first, water second. Stones are the third. And work is the fourth. There’s no escape from the day.”*

She laughed, *“You make it sound noble.”*

Jonathan replied, *“Everything noble comes with sweat and dust.”*

At the quarry, he found a line of men already at work. One of them asked, *“Did you bring the tools?”*

Jonathan pulled a small satchel from his shoulder. *“All accounted for. Picks, shovels, chisels. Even the spare ropes.”*

Another man, wearing a wide-brimmed hat, nodded. *“Good. We’ll need everything today. The desert doesn’t forgive laziness.”*

Jonathan began measuring the area, inspecting the stones. He said to himself, *“Precision is survival. The empire may fall, but a wall laid straight holds forever.”*

He glanced at a younger man, struggling with a hammer. *“Let me help. Watch the swing. Not too wide, not too high. Control.”*

The young man responded, *“Yes, Jonathan. Thank you.”*

Jonathan said, *“No thanks needed. We build together. Or not at all.”*

As the morning passed, a merchant arrived with carts of steel and lumber. He greeted Jonathan. *“We bring supplies for the foundation. You’ll need this.”*

Jonathan replied, *“Much appreciated. Every piece counts.”*

The merchant commented, *“I hear you’re starting a coin project too. Using your name for trade?”*

Jonathan smiled slightly. *“Yes. Small beginnings. Every empire starts with an idea and a signature.”*

The merchant nodded. *“Clever. People will follow that.”*

Nearby, a boy shouted, *“Jonathan! Look at this!”*

He approached and saw a newly laid stone, perfectly aligned. Jonathan said, *“Well done. Each stone is a word in our story. Remember that.”*

The man in the wide-brimmed hat nodded approvingly. *“You teach well, Jonathan. Not just labor, but vision.”*

Jonathan replied, *“Vision is built one stone at a time, as is freedom. We teach with action, not only words.”*

As noon approached, the sun blazed overhead. Jonathan wiped his brow and muttered, *“Salt in the air, fire in the sky. And yet, we endure.”*

A woman carrying water called out, *“Jonathan, rest and drink!”*

He nodded, taking a sip. *“Grateful. Every drop is precious.”*

Another man, surveying the work, asked, *“Do you think the town will recognize our efforts?”*

Jonathan replied, *“Recognition is secondary. What matters is the foundation we lay. Walls, stones, laws, and hearts alike.”*

A loud noise came from the blacksmith’s corner—hammering metal against metal. Jonathan smiled. *“The sound of progress. And sacrifice.”*

He paused, looking at the horizon. *“Every day, we carve a name in the desert. Every stone, every coin, every signature. This is how freedom grows.”*

By evening, the group gathered under the shade of a sparse tree. Jonathan said, *“Rest now. Tomorrow, the labor continues. But remember—what we build is more than stone. It is promise.”*

The men nodded, some drinking from flasks, others simply leaning back in the dust.

Jonathan reflected quietly, *“Exile is no longer punishment. It is preparation. For laws that do not bleed, for coins that carry belief, for a nation that remembers us not as servants, but as free people.”*

Night fell, the moon rising round and white above the cabins. Jonathan murmured to himself, *“We were here. We were free. And tomorrow, we build again.”*

The next morning, Jonathan awoke to the first light creeping over the Southwest Territory. The desert air was already heavy with heat. He rubbed his eyes and muttered, *“Hot, hot, hot. But work calls before the sun fully rises.”*

He brewed a fresh pot of coffee and carried it outside, where a few early risers were already moving about. One man called, *“Jonathan! You’re up early again!”*

Jonathan smiled. *“Morning. The stones won’t wait, and neither will the empire in our minds.”*

A young woman passed by carrying a bucket of water. She asked, *“Are you heading to the quarry now?”*

Jonathan nodded. *“Yes. Water first, stones second, labor third, conversation fourth. And maybe reflection fifth.”*

She laughed lightly. *“You make a schedule of freedom, I see.”*

Jonathan replied, *“Freedom requires discipline, just as walls require stones.”*

At the quarry, the men were already at work. A man in a leather vest called, *“Jonathan, we need help with the eastern corner. The stones aren’t aligning properly.”*

Jonathan approached, examining the placement. *“Not too high, not too low. Keep the angles true. A crooked wall teaches nothing except regret.”*

Another worker, hammer in hand, looked up. *“Yes, sir. I’ll adjust it.”*

Jonathan nodded approvingly. *“Good. Each stone is more than labor—it is a word, a promise, a testament.”*

Nearby, a merchant arrived with a wagon full of steel beams. He called, *“Jonathan, these are for the next section of the foundation. You’ll need them.”*

Jonathan replied, *“Every piece counts. Thank you. The desert remembers every contribution.”*

The young boy from the previous day shouted again, *“Jonathan! Look at this!”*

Jonathan came over and saw the stone aligned perfectly. *“Well done. Each piece builds not only a wall but a story. Remember that. One stone, one signature, one coin at a time.”*

A man in a wide-brimmed hat surveyed the progress and said, *“Jonathan, your teachings go beyond labor. You give vision to these hands.”*

Jonathan replied, *“Vision is built, not taught. A wall straight and true is a lesson in persistence, patience, and freedom.”*

The sun rose higher, burning the backs of the men and the dust of the desert. Jonathan paused and took a sip from his water flask. *“Every drop is precious. Every breath, earned.”*

A woman carrying a tray of food approached. *“Jonathan, you should eat. You’ve been working too hard.”*

He nodded gratefully. *“Thank you. Sacrifice is easier when shared.”*

A man overseeing the lumber called, *“Jonathan, the steel from the merchant is ready to be lifted. Can you coordinate?”*

Jonathan directed the men. *“Lift carefully, align perfectly. Every beam, every stone, carries weight beyond itself. Treat it with respect.”*

As noon approached, a group of travelers arrived, curious about the settlement. One man asked, *“Is this where Jonathan works? We heard tales of a new order, a new coin?”*

Jonathan replied, *“Yes. Foundations are laid with stone and belief alike. Stay, observe, learn.”*

The travelers murmured among themselves. A young woman asked, *“Will this coin really hold value?”*

Jonathan smiled. *“Value comes not from metal alone but from trust, labor, and vision. That is what we build here.”*

A loud banging echoed from the blacksmith’s forge. Jonathan muttered, *“Progress. Sacrifice. Civilization in motion.”*

By evening, the men gathered in the shade of a sparse tree near the quarry. Jonathan said, *“Rest now. Tomorrow, labor continues. But remember, each stone, each signature, each coin, tells our story. Exile is no longer punishment—it is preparation.”*

A man carrying a bucket of water nodded. *“You always see more than labor, Jonathan.”*

Jonathan replied, *“Because labor is the language of freedom. And this desert will remember us—not as servants, but as builders of something larger than ourselves.”*

Night fell. The moon rose full and white over the cabins. Jonathan whispered to himself, *“We were here. We were free. And tomorrow, we build again.”*

That night, Jonathan returned to the settlement’s game room, adjacent to the saloon and post office. The room was alive with conversation, the clink of coins, and the scent of tobacco. A man in a green-striped vest waved from the far corner, calling, *“Jonathan! Come sit. You look weary.”*

Jonathan nodded and approached. *“Evening. The stones demand attention, but conversation feeds the mind.”*

A woman in a red dress poured drinks at the bar. *“You work too hard, Jonathan. You need a drink.”*

He smiled politely. *“Perhaps, but one cannot trade stones for forgetfulness.”*

A man nearby, pale and clean-shaven, whispered, *“Is that the man who talks of new coins and new laws?”*

Jonathan overheard and said softly, *“Yes, and every word is measured, every action deliberate.”*

Another man, leaning on a table, said jokingly, *“Do you like men or boys, Jonathan?”*

Jonathan replied, *“I like sacrifices, and the work that accompanies them.”*

The man laughed. *“Good answer. We have a king, after all.”*

Jonathan, leaning on the table, added, *“Repent ye, repent ye—the kingdom of heaven is at hand. But even kingdoms must bend to justice.”*

The bartender, polishing glasses, interjected, *“Temple is for men. Church is for children.”*

A new voice came from behind—a visitor in pale robes, murmuring, *“Oh, Jerusalem, saved by an angel!”*

Jonathan turned. *“Welcome. Every new face is a potential ally in the work of freedom.”*

A merchant standing near the door announced, *“I am opening a stall for steel and lumber. Contributions to the settlement are welcome.”*

Jonathan nodded. *“Some work is better than none. Each effort builds not just the town but the law that will govern it.”*

Nearby, a man whispered, *“Nephi is here. Like you, Jonathan.”*

Jonathan said aloud, *“If they are hungry, let us feed them—not just with food, but with purpose and understanding. Coins, stones, and labor—these are our tools of freedom.”*

A woman from the back of the room exclaimed, *“I’m excited!”*

Jonathan replied, *“So am I. Excitement is the fuel of creation.”*

As the night deepened, the crowd began discussing politics, trade, and the coming influx of settlers. Jonathan moved among them, quietly observing and guiding.

A man asked, *“Will your coin hold value?”*

Jonathan answered, *“Value comes not from metal alone but from trust, labor, and shared vision. That is the currency of a free people.”*

Another man, pouring a drink, joked, *“What about the dogs outside?”*

Jonathan laughed softly. *“They seek acknowledgment, just as we do. Every creature participates in the order of things.”*

The bartender handed Jonathan a small coin. *“For your efforts.”*

Jonathan took it and said, *“Each coin is a promise, a signature in stone and in deed. Let it remind us why we labor and why we build.”*

The men around the tables nodded, raising their drinks. The settlement hummed with life, even in exile.

Outside, the moon hung high, silver and constant. Jonathan whispered to himself, *“Exile is no longer punishment—it is preparation. We were here. We were free. And tomorrow, we build again.”*

The next morning, Jonathan rose with the sun breaking across the desert. The heat was already pressing against his skin. He walked to the faucet near the post office to fetch water. *“All this water makes me heavy,”* he muttered to himself, shaking the bucket.

A woman from the settlement appeared, holding a wet towel. *“You need this for your head. You look overheated.”*

Jonathan took it and pressed it to his forehead. *“Thank you. The desert is relentless, and so are its lessons.”*

In the distance, the mechanical pounding of presses, hammers, and clanging metals filled the air. *“What is that noise?”* she asked.

Jonathan shrugged. *“Hard work. The sound of building, of survival. Not all who labor see the purpose immediately.”*

She looked toward the smoke and dust. *“It is sacrifice, isn’t it?”*

Jonathan nodded. *“Yes, but also growth. Every effort leaves its mark on this land.”*

He walked toward the quarry where men were arranging stones for foundations. A labor foreman called, *“Jonathan, ready to begin?”*

“Always,” Jonathan replied. *“I am here to observe, to assist, and to learn.”*

The foreman handed him a list of chores. *“Fetch water, move stones, organize materials. The work is necessary, but not endless. Keep your mind with it.”*

Jonathan accepted the list. *“I am human, not a machine. But willing, always willing.”*

Another man, leaning on a shovel, said, *“You have a mind for politics as well as labor. Be careful not to lose focus.”*

Jonathan smiled. *“Politics and labor are the same. One builds the mind; the other builds the world. Both require patience and precision.”*

As he moved along the line of men, he collected stones, organized timber, and discussed plans for a new coin system with a small group nearby.

“Do you understand the rules of the coin?” a man asked.

“Yes,” Jonathan said. *“Each coin is not just currency—it is a record of trust, work, and loyalty. Each effort, each signature, each stone contributes to its value.”*

Another laborer laughed. *“And what of the dogs outside?”*

Jonathan chuckled. *“They seek acknowledgment, like us all. Give them a morsel, and they follow. Give them purpose, and they guide.”*

By midday, the sun was high, oppressive. Jonathan wiped sweat from his brow and surveyed the settlement. Cabins lined the streets, twelve across, twelve across the other. Merchants, cowboys, laborers, and travelers moved among them. The air smelled of dust, metal, and sweat, punctuated with the occasional scent of cooked meat.

A woman carrying supplies stopped him. *“Jonathan, what drives you? Why all this effort?”*

“Because the desert teaches patience and perseverance. Every stone, every coin, every signature builds a nation, even before kings arrive.”

Nearby, a young man from Great Britain called, *“Jonathan, you think the new settlers will adapt quickly?”*

“They will,” Jonathan replied. *“As long as we guide them. As long as we show that labor and trust shape freedom more than fear ever could.”*

The sound of a bell signaled midday. The workers paused. Jonathan collected his thoughts. *“Rest briefly,”* he said. *“Drink water, eat if you must, but remember: our work is not just for today—it is for tomorrow, for the coin, for the people who will follow us.”*

He walked to a shaded corner, leaning against a stone wall. He spoke softly to himself, *“Exile is not punishment. It is preparation. Each day, each labor, each conversation, teaches me how to guide, how to build, and how to remain free even under the weight of empire.”*

From the distance, the sound of hammers resumed. Jonathan returned to the line, ready to continue. A man beside him said, *“Jonathan, your dedication inspires the rest. How do you remain so steady?”*

Jonathan smiled. *“I am human. I am tired. But I see the horizon, and it calls me—not just for me, but for all who labor beside me. That is steadiness.”*

By sunset, the day’s work was done. Stones arranged, coins counted, plans for trade drafted. Jonathan stood at the edge of the settlement, watching the desert glow gold and red. He whispered, *“Tomorrow, we continue. Another day, another signature, another stone, another coin. The desert will remember that we were here. And we were free.”*

The next morning, Jonathan woke with the sun casting long orange shadows across the sand. The air was already thick with heat. He made his way to the center of the settlement, where a small crowd had gathered near the trading post.

A caravan of travelers had arrived from distant lands—merchants from China, traders from the Caribbean, and a group of Jewish merchants carrying gold and jewels. The crowd murmured, curious and cautious.

Jonathan approached one of the traders, a tall man with a pale complexion and a leather satchel. *“Good morning. I am Jonathan. Are you here to trade?”*

The trader nodded. *“Yes. We bring jewels, spices, and ideas from afar. What do you offer in exchange?”*

Jonathan held up a handful of newly minted coins. *“These are trade coins of loyalty and labor. Each represents a day of work, a signature of agreement, and a stone laid for the foundation of this settlement.”*

The trader raised an eyebrow. *“A coin for work? Tell me more.”*

Jonathan smiled. *“It is not mere currency. It is proof that we are building something greater than ourselves. That every laborer, every mason, every thinker contributes to the freedom of the people and the stability of our community.”*

A nearby man from Great Britain leaned forward. *“You make it sound noble, Jonathan. But will the travelers accept it?”*

“We shall see,” Jonathan replied. *“We present it with honesty, with explanation, and with trust. Those who understand labor and dedication will recognize its value.”*

The Jewish merchants inspected the coins, turning them in their hands. *“Interesting,”* one said. *“A coin that carries more than metal. It carries story, effort, and agreement.”*

Jonathan nodded. *“Exactly. And for each coin you accept, you are not just trading goods—you are participating in the creation of a new order, one that remembers the labor and loyalty of every hand involved.”*

A merchant from the Caribbean added, *“And what of disputes? What if someone refuses the coin or breaks agreement?”*

Jonathan gestured toward the settlement. *“We rely on signatures, witness, and community memory. The desert watches, and so do the people. Dishonor is visible, and trust once broken is hard to restore. But when honored, it strengthens the bonds of everyone here.”*

A woman in a red dress, observing from the edge of the crowd, asked, *“And if someone wants to join your settlement? Learn your ways?”*

Jonathan smiled. *“They are welcome. They must work, contribute, and learn. They must understand that freedom comes not from the absence of authority, but from the discipline to create and uphold law, fairness, and justice together.”*

The day progressed with conversations, trades, and agreements. Stones were laid for new cabins, coins exchanged for jewels and spices, and Jonathan walked among the workers, smiling at the diligence and curiosity of the settlers.

“Jonathan,” a young man asked, *“how do you remain so patient with all these negotiations?”*

Jonathan paused, brushing sweat from his brow. *“Patience is learned in exile. Every stone, every coin, every conversation is practice. The desert teaches us that haste creates ruin. We must be steady, deliberate, and thoughtful.”*

By afternoon, the settlement was alive with motion. Merchants discussed trade routes, travelers shared stories of distant lands, and children watched in wonder as the coin system took shape.

A British laborer, observing Jonathan, asked quietly, *“Do you think this coin system will endure?”*

Jonathan looked out across the rows of cabins, the settlers at work, and the desert beyond. *“It will endure as long as we remember why we created it: not for profit, not for power, but for trust, labor, and freedom. Every coin carries that memory, and every signature strengthens it.”*

As the sun dipped toward the horizon, Jonathan gathered the traders and workers together. *“Tomorrow,”* he said, *“we continue to build. We continue to trade. We continue to lay the stones, collect the coins, and remember that our work is not just for today—it is for the people who will follow, and for the freedom that will endure long after we are gone.”*

The traders nodded, understanding the weight of his words. The settlers returned to their work with renewed vigor, and Jonathan walked through the rows of cabins, observing the settlement he was shaping, feeling the pulse of a new order forming in the desert, one coin, one stone, one signature at a time.

The next morning, the settlement awoke to a tense atmosphere. Word had spread that one of the traveling merchants refused Jonathan's coins, claiming they held no value outside the settlement.

Jonathan met the merchant near the trading post. *"Good morning. I hear you have concerns about our coins?"*

The merchant, a stout man from the Caribbean, crossed his arms. *"I do. Metal alone cannot buy spices or jewels elsewhere. Why should I accept this?"*

Jonathan smiled patiently. *"Because it is more than metal. Each coin represents labor, loyalty, and agreement. It is proof that every hand, every mind contributes to the settlement. It carries the weight of trust."*

The merchant snorted. *"Trust does not fill my satchel with spices."*

A British laborer nearby spoke up. *"Jonathan, perhaps you should explain the redemption process again. He may not understand."*

Jonathan turned to the merchant. *"Very well. Each coin can be exchanged within the settlement for goods, labor, or services. You may also trade them with others who recognize our system. It is a network of value, built on honesty and diligence. Those who honor it prosper. Those who ignore it, lose trust and opportunity."*

The merchant frowned. *"And if I refuse? What then?"*

Jonathan gestured toward the growing settlement. *"Then you remain outside the network. You may trade elsewhere, but here, you will have no standing. Others will choose to work with those who honor the agreement. That is the law of trust in our desert."*

A woman from the settlement, her voice sharp and clear, spoke from the edge of the crowd. *"Jonathan, you risk alienating important traders. They may leave entirely."*

Jonathan nodded. *"Perhaps. But I will not compromise the integrity of the system for fear of discomfort. Freedom and trust must be earned and respected. If we bend for fear, we lose the foundation of what we are building."*

The merchant muttered under his breath but took a coin reluctantly. *"I will try it. But if this fails, I am gone."*

Jonathan smiled, placing a hand on the man's shoulder. *"Then you will have witnessed how labor and loyalty can create value where there was none before."*

The British laborer whispered to Jonathan. *"Do you think he will understand?"*

Jonathan watched as the merchant walked toward the trading post, examining the coins in his hand. *"In time, perhaps. Some lessons are learned slowly. Others must witness the proof themselves."*

Later that afternoon, a group of settlers gathered to discuss how to handle disputes over the coin system.

“We cannot force anyone,” one man said. *“But we can demonstrate the value clearly.”*

Jonathan nodded. *“We will host a trade demonstration tomorrow. Show how coins can be exchanged for labor, goods, and services. Let them see the benefit directly, not just hear it from me.”*

A young woman added, *“And what if someone cheats?”*

Jonathan’s eyes hardened. *“Then the community records it. Witnesses note the breach. Trust once broken is difficult to restore, but the system survives. This is not a system of fear—it is a system of honor.”*

As evening fell, Jonathan walked through the settlement, observing cabins, traders, and workers. He noticed a small crowd gathered near the coin ledger, examining signatures and trade records.

“Jonathan,” one man called, *“there is a dispute over who laid certain stones for the new cabins.”*

Jonathan sighed but smiled. *“Then we record carefully, verify with witnesses, and honor the work as it is done. Justice in labor is as important as justice in trade.”*

A young boy tugged at Jonathan’s sleeve. *“Sir, will the coins really work?”*

Jonathan knelt to the boy’s level. *“Yes. One coin at a time, one signature at a time, one stone at a time. The settlement will remember who we are and what we built. That is the true value of these coins.”*

As night covered the desert, the settlers gathered around small fires, trading stories, labor reports, and coins. Some were convinced, some skeptical, but all were participating. Jonathan stood among them, quietly observing, knowing that the real test of his system was only beginning.